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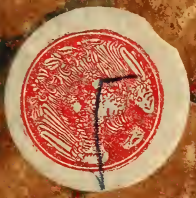

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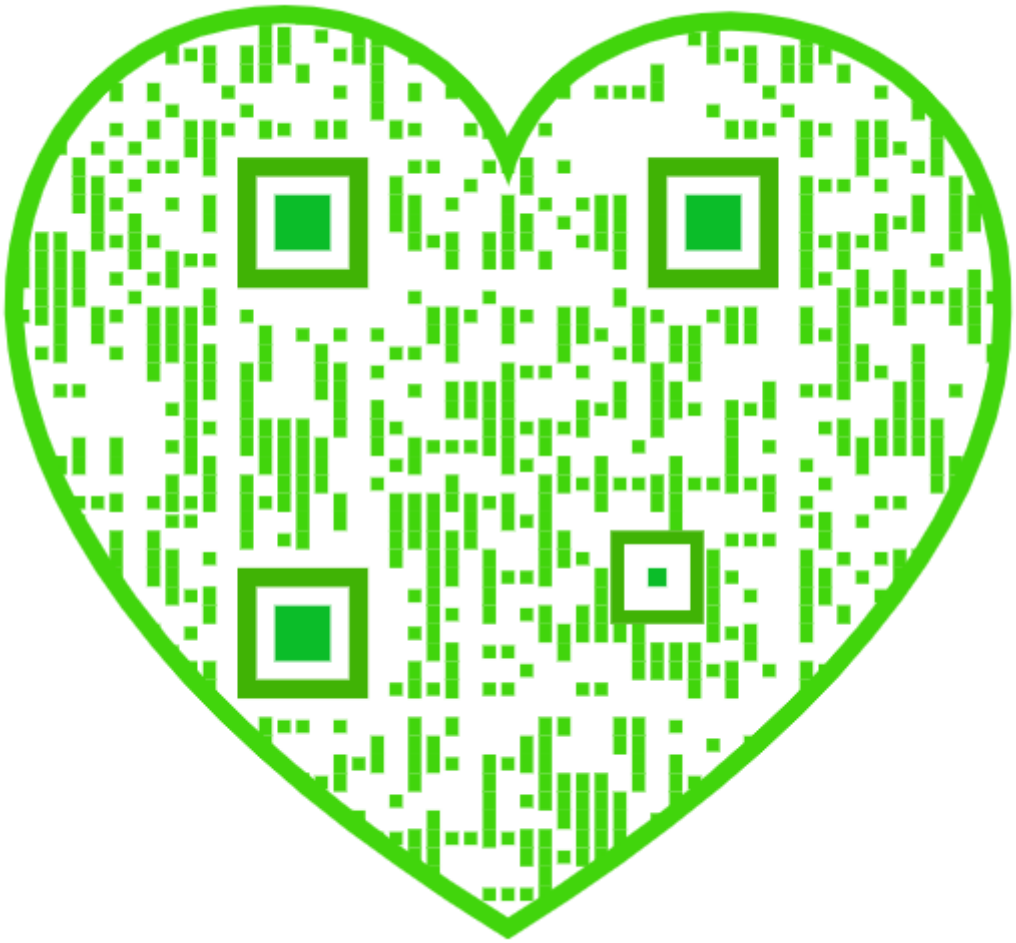

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The Ethics of Political Science

A Lecture by William Everett

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1891

When Mr. Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg of the United States government as of the people, by the people, for the people, his words met with general assent. The nation felt that it had its own government rightly defined. But such short phrases, however tunefully they strike the ear on great occasions, need to be developed, or their wit alone is noticed and their wisdom overlooked.

Our government is in some respects directly by the people. On some occasions, as in the case of constitutional amendments, the people vote directly upon measures, and say what shall or shall not become laws; but in most cases the government of the people is through officers, chosen out of their own bosom, to whom they commit the government, to be resumed at stated and not long intervals. This I believe is right. I would not have the people do everything. I would have them choose the right men, and trust them.

In this way a government of the people is truly held, when few restrictions lie on who may be chosen to office, and when the people, having selected their legislatures and governors by deliberate choice, leave them with ample powers and ample tenures to perform their duty, under strict responsibility always to the people of whom they are the deputies, yet at the same time with a sense of freedom and discretion, feeling that they are not mere servants to obey the people's orders, but true representatives, to think for the public welfare.

One would conceive that such an occupation, by the choice of the people of the United States, or of any part of it, or to be appointed by one so elected, would be an eminently honorable position. In theory, the government of the people, by the people, for the people, is the noblest development of political science, outranking all despotisms, monarchies, and oligarchies. Practically, the people of the United States insist that their service, in

peace or war, carries with it a distinction that no citizen or subject of any other country dare look down upon. To be enrolled in the legislative or executive service of this country is looked upon in the abstract as most honorable, and the title of an American statesman is used as enviable.

The eagerness to enter on the public service is great. There is rarely any lack of candidates for any legislative or executive position. Such a thing does happen, but chiefly when the chances of election or appointment are small. There are plenty of people ready to take what they are likely to get.

Yet one can hardly utter this last sentence without a tinge of sarcasm, without raising the feeling that there are indeed enough and too many persons eager for political service, and that it is no very honorable quest that they seek. It is the fashion in New England certainly to speak with contempt of any man who announces himself as a candidate for a political position. He is called an office-seeker, and, if very active in politics, a politician, which, though only the Greek for "statesman," is made to bear a very different sense. Just so we distinguish a physician from a quack, and a lawyer from a pettifogger, but with this difference, that quacks and pettifoggers are held to be in the minority, or, at least, in the background, while honorable doctors and lawyers come to the front, and keep the baser grades of their professions always under a cloud. But office-seekers and politicians are talked of as furnishing the vast number of men prominent in public life. The neutral word "candidate," the honorable name "statesman" are used sparingly, or on occasions of formal compliment alone. It is held glorious to be a statesman and not dishonorable to be a public man, but yet that one can hardly go into the profession of public life without soiling one's garments, if not his person, and that the would-be statesman or public man is almost sure to end in that doubtful thing, a politician.

So, when I state my subject as the Ethics of Political Service, many Americans will declare that there are no ethics in political service, or, if there are, that they are essentially different ethics from those of ordinary life, that the man who voluntarily engages in the civil service of the nation must inevitably submit to a lowering of moral principle. An ex-senator has stated, or is said

to have stated, that the Decalogue and the Golden Rule have no place in politics. He was vehemently abused for this saying in papers and speeches all over the country. After a time he is reported as saying that he did not say what he thought should be, but what he thought was, "a condition," to borrow another famous phrase, "not a theory of politics."

I am no admirer of Senator Ingalls; but surely much needless wrath has been wasted on him for avowing in public what so many people are saying in private to each other, and acting as if they believed what they said. Let the question be put fairly to most of our citizens if they believe that a young man could propose to himself a political career, and at the same time retain his moral principles and his scrupulous conscience, with the same chance of success that he would have if he proposed to be a stainless minister, a conscientious lawyer, a high-minded physician, an honorable merchant, an honest manufacturer, a faithful mechanic, a respectable tradesman, a loyal soldier, a gallant sailor, a faithful schoolmaster. I fancy the general reply would be, "No. The profession of the politician in this country is tangled up with immorality, corruption, self-seeking, trickery. If there are honorable and honest politicians, they are exceptions,—unfortunate exceptions; for they will have worn their hearts out in the eternal wrestle with the unscrupulous around them, for whom they will ultimately be set aside in their struggle for the highest places. I shall advise my son to seek another calling"; and then, if he is very witty, he will add, "even a stock broker's or a plumber's."

I. And be it observed that, with this general denunciation of political life, there is in our community a broad line drawn between being in public life and trying to be in it. Many persons would say that it was an excellent thing to have men of high honor and morality hold public office, but that these should come to them unsought; that the community should select men who have proved themselves high-minded and intelligent in other ways; that in such cases serving the public at the public's call is a duty, which a good citizen ought to discharge, but that political ambition, for which a man lays himself out at the opening of life, is a corrupting, an inherently vicious aim, or, to use the popular, to me the senseless phrase, "the office should seek the man," and should never be applied for.

Now, I believe this to be a false and demoralizing idea, one which has done much to keep out of politics the very men who ought to go into it. I will say why.

1. It seems absurd on the face of it that it can be degrading and corrupting to try to obtain what is perfectly proper to hold when obtained. Why, if it is honorable for a good man to be in the legislature or custom-house, in order to raise the tone of it, and perhaps keep out some meaner and less worthy man, is it not equally honorable for a good man to be an applicant for the legislature or the custom-house, in order to raise the standard of candidacy, and perhaps keep out unworthy candidates?

2. We make this distinction in no other calling. A young man who means to be a minister, a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, or to go into any branch of trade, says so. He shapes his course with a view to that calling. He enters some establishment where he will learn it; and, when he feels equipped for the competition, he announces the fact. He puts out a sign. He applies for employment. He interests his friends in obtaining it. Some men no doubt do this by low and dishonorable acts, but they are discredited in the professions. It is perfectly well recognized that there are creditable ways of seeking employment. Perhaps there is no more honorable thing to say of a young man than that he is a candidate for the ministry. Why not for political position, and as directly?

3. This singular notion that one should not directly and avowedly come forward as a candidate for political service is peculiar to our day and our community. It is unknown to England and France. It was unknown to the Southern States before the war. I do not know of its existence in our own Western country. These communities all, I do not hesitate to say, get a better selection of candidates for office than we do, because no man there has to apologize for being a candidate, or affect to wait coyly to be asked.

4. The whole thing involves pretence on pretence. We begin by declaring that an honorable desire for the profession of a statesman is a conceited and pushing greed for political intrigue, and we end by calling sheer artifice for political promotion by some honorable and delicate name. A scheming trickster pulls every

wire that is near his hand to get nominated for office. He sets half a dozen lodges and camp-fires at work to hustle him before the caucus. He spreads a dozen rumors that straightforward men, who in any other community would offer themselves like men, are unavailable; and then, when his schemes are all set and the cards all rigged for his share in the deal, it is announced that the Hon. Jefferson D. Lincoln will allow his friends to use his name for the governor's council, and that with great reluctance he has consented to stand for the office, which in this case has sought the man.

5. Once more this way of looking at political office as being a thing which no high-minded man must seek, but wait till it comes to him, wholly prevents one's preparing himself for it as a specific calling. In every other profession there is encouragement, there is almost a necessity, for a young man to make it a study at the best schools for that specialty, because he can almost surely command good employment after such training, and without that he will almost surely miss it. And the tendency in our intensely specializing age is every day to have more and more of such training, and to call upon all schools to provide more and more instruction for the new trades that are constantly rising to professional dignity. There is no calling that demands more thorough training than that of a public servant. History, law, finance, industry, a hundred elements, make up the daily demands of an American politician. You cannot read a single debate in one of our legislatures without seeing how from mere ignorance and want of training men of natural shrewdness, of high principle, — nay, even of practical experience, — make a botch of their work. Sometimes they are overborne by meaner men, who know what they are talking about. Sometimes, alas! their ignorant honesty carries the day; and the country is loaded with some measure which has everything to recommend it except some slight acquaintance with the subject with which it deals.

I know that there is another theory of all this. I know that it is supposed that any man can become a good political servant in a free country. Honest and patriotic citizens think so, who believe that it is as simple an affair to carry out the Constitution as it is to read it. But base and selfish citizens know better. They know it is by no means a perfectly simple thing to be a

politician, but that the science and art of politics must be sedulously learned in some committee-room at the back of a saloon. And I would appeal to the patriots if the result is not extremely unsatisfactory, annoying, costly to them, and if the bosses, who carefully train their candidates to their service, do not make pretty much all that there is to be made out of it?

Politics is a special calling. All citizens are not equally adapted to practise it. The intrigues and bosses have long ago established primary schools, preparatory schools, universities, professional schools, normal schools, competitive examinations for training intrigues and bosses like themselves, or they know they could never make a living. Why do not honest citizens recognize that politics is a calling which for its honorable practice needs honorable training, and that a mere amateur politician ought to find it as hard to get employment as an amateur doctor? Yet no one will submit to such training until it is considered as honorable to offer one's self for service in this calling as in any other.

I would say then, as my first point, do away with the reproach that rests upon politics by encouraging men to go into it. Encourage them as the time of the elections draws near to announce their wish, not in secret to a few friends, who may then begin to work and intrigue for them, but openly, in the face of day, as they would announce that they are all ready to serve you in divinity, in law, in medicine, in art, in commerce; and, believe me, you will have no reason to regret putting a premium on straightforwardness and frankness.

II. But let us suppose that he who is desirous for public service has been nominated in such ways as are deemed legitimate, how is it about his canvass and his election? Is it not true that the candidate is forced to associate with men whom he would never think of knowing except as a candidate, to suppress his real sentiments in order to please them, to win their favor by all sorts of tricks that he never would think of practising in any other profession, and, in a word, to buy his place by the expenditure of whatever commodity his constituents most covet? Do not the candidate for the legislature and the candidate for some executive position play into each other's hands by the meanest services, such as lawyer and client or doctor and patient would never practise?

Let us admit that there is truth in all this: let us admit that many candidates do stoop to low companions and low actions. I ask, Where lies the fault? Who elect? The people, the majority of voters: it is they, it is you, who determine on what terms a candidate shall be supported. If the votes of the people are for sale, it is because the people themselves fix the price. If you complain that your member of Congress bought his election, and that he could not have got in without money, why do you vote for a man who will spend money? If the venal part of the constituencies to which you belong insists on selling its votes, and if the choice lies with such, then you, the unbought, are either in the minority or, being in the majority, you let the venal minority control you.

Fellow-citizens, a man of honor, a man of scrupulous conscience, will in ordinary cases accept as honorable what men like himself call honorable. When they say their service is for sale, he will buy it. Before the English Parliament was reformed, there were many seats for sale. It was a question of so many thousand pounds, sometimes paid to great proprietors in boroughs where there was really no constituency at all, sometimes to a venal body of voters, with whom the candidate dealt directly. The seat once purchased, the member was perfectly free, freer than many a member from a popular constituency, who might interrogate him for every vote and tax him for every act displeasing to them. Do you suppose it was only self-seeking and base men who got into Parliament that way? Not at all. Those seats were often purchased by men of the sternest probity and of Puritanical scruples,— men who devoted commanding genius and untiring toil to the reform of abuses, the upholding of rights, the maintenance of virtue and religion in the face of worldliness and corruption. Every religious man, every philanthropist, every lawyer, will understand me when I say that William Wilberforce and Samuel Romilly bought their seats in Parliament as completely as they bought their clothes and their houses. Once in, they were almost too scrupulous, too sternly honorable, too little indulgent to the feelings of their fellow-men. William Wilberforce fought for the abolition of the slave-trade with a determination which Sheridan compared to Napoleon's. Sir Samuel Romilly assailed the bloody

penal code of the eighteenth century with a devotion like Henry Vane's. Yet they were not eccentric. They were not visionary. One was a consistent Tory, the other a consistent Whig. Wilberforce was thoroughly faithful to the traditions of the English Church, Romilly to those of the English bar. The independence, the humanity, the fidelity, they showed in their purchased seats commended them to the two most independent popular constituencies in England. Yorkshire chose Wilberforce, and Westminster chose Romilly, because they had proved that, though the English constitution made most of the doors to Parliament low and dirty, they did not part with their honor when the recognized practices of the time made them part with their money.

Fellow-citizens, we have no rotten boroughs in Massachusetts. We have no Connecticut towns: we have no Rocky Mountain legislatures. If it is possible for a man to buy his way to high position here, it is because the people who have votes to give prefer to sell them, or, at all events, consent that bosses and heelers shall do the selling on commission and pocket the proceeds.

But the associates that a would-be statesman has to encounter are so lowering. He cannot select them as he would. This last is true. One who solicits the suffrages of his fellow-citizens, of whom every man has an equal right in electing him, is obliged — he ought to be obliged — to mix freely with all those whose suffrage he solicits. He must, he ought to be dragged out of his ordinary surroundings, and made to come in contact with all sorts of men. Nothing unfits men more for political service than their attachment to that particular line of life into which they have gone, that curious conceit of their profession which is every bit as dangerous as conceit of themselves, — more so, because it is fostered by all those who are associated with them from day to day. Your business man talks as if only business men were fit to be legislated for, your laborer as if none were worth counting but manual workmen, your professional man as if professional men alone understood the country's needs, your soldier as if the country were all comprised in the Grand Army and the Loyal Legion. Nothing so soon forces a man to understand that his calling is not the only one for which the country cares as bringing face to face and voice to voice the men who are to elect and the candidates for their

suffrages, provided only they are brought together. But are they so in our system? A candidate, if he appeals to any constituency beyond the limits of his own town, appears before it once, perhaps oftener, half a dozen times it may be, to address a meeting. Perhaps before that hour he meets a few neighbors in a friendly gathering. Perhaps a reception is held, where the absurd process is gone through of the candidate's standing up at one end of a room with a string of people walking up and shaking hands with him, while neither he nor they in the least know what to say to each other; and there is no chance if they did, because the next man and the next is waiting. Extremely gratifying it may be, but how empty! how absurd!

But these people are not those with whom the candidate comes into close and frequent contact. These are another class, the professional working politicians, the committees whom their fellow-citizens elect to conduct the necessary machinery of a campaign. And it is upon the heads of these men that the hardest language is lavished. It is these who are believed to make politics a trade, and a very mean trade. It is these who are supposed to have stripped that occupation of all honor, unselfishness, and high motives generally, and to bring such a taint upon all they touch that the most honorable and independent of men, no matter what his purposes and aims, must, whether as an expectant candidate, a nominee, or an elected officer, contract a stain from them which will cling to him forever. Such is the general opinion, independent of party, charging both friends and adversaries alike with committing the regular management of their politics to men who, whether they directly nominate the candidates for public service or perchance accept those nominated otherwise, insist on carrying on the election by corrupt and corrupting means. If this general opinion is true, if practical politics is a low base trade, who made it so? Who chooses these committees? Who keeps them in power? Who, above all, lets them surround the men, both of whom will probably be voted for, since they have received what are called the regular nominations? There is a good deal said about the duty of good citizens to attend primary meetings, and see that the party nominates proper candidates. This would be excellent advice if the primaries really were primaries, if they

were not properly secondaries, tertiaries, centenaries, millenaries rather, where the business which is nominally brought forward for the first time has really been cut, dried, soaked, salted, hung up, and smoked at a thousand meetings before even the average citizen hears of the primary call. But is it not an equal, an even more imperative duty for those who regret the lowering of American politics to elect on their permanent committees men not merely of shrewdness and energy, but of high principles and strict practices? Do not tell me that such men have not the time to spare from their regular business. They have the time to spare for other things. Our Sunday-schools, our public schools, our hospitals, our town libraries, our charitable societies, our musical clubs, our organizations for a hundred serious and social objects, can command week in and week out the services of men as different from machine politicians as can be imagined. If it is otherwise in political management, if a candidate sees such men but sparingly and a lower set of men more frequently, whose fault is it but that of the citizens themselves?

Fellow-citizens, it seems to me that in this matter of political associations a man is tainted by what he brings, not by what he receives. All that the highest authority has said about what goeth into the mouth and what cometh out of the mouth, and which of these defileth a man, is most true of political companions. That man will be tainted and lowered by the low element in politics who is prepared to be, who has himself the low nature which contracts dirt and causes it to stick. Let me illustrate this by a homely, but I think not inaccurate, simile. I once bought a carpet which attracted me extremely by the warmth of its texture, the good taste of its pattern, and the harmony of its colors. It had all these, and was yet at a very moderate price. Soon after it was down, spots began to appear in it, which no amount of domestic cleansing could get out, unsightly stains, which soon made it look worse instead of better than all the other carpets in the house, which were yet exposed to exactly the same atmosphere. On inquiry, I found that it was probably made by a certain company, which was notorious for using half-cleansed wool, still containing much grease, which would catch every atom of floating dust and fix it forever in spots. I say that a man who is himself clean can go

through the very slums of politics, and get no stain that he cannot shake off by one vigorous stamp, while a candidate whose native fibre is undressed and greasy will pick up dirt even where none can be seen.

But there are two forces which assail a candidate on the very threshold of the coveted service, just before and just after the critical day which is to make or mar him. I mean the giving of political pledges and the payment of political debts. No doubt the courage and the conscience of many men are affected by these two forces. And first of political pledges. As soon as it is understood that any one is before a constituency, he receives a number of addresses, appeals, questions, to make him say beyond mistake and in much detail exactly how he stands affected to what are called the demands of various interests which are likely to be presented to the body of which he is a candidate. These are apt to be accompanied by a threat that, if he does not answer satisfactorily each of the questions and demands, he will be politically boycotted by the body in whose behalf they are put. This is generally a body of undefined numbers, the size of whose vote must be pretty much a matter of guesswork. Such bodies are usually more earnest than intelligent in their political views, strongly holding to a few one-sided principles, crudely expressed in certain catch-words, which, if allowed to develop their full force, would mean far more than those who use them ever intend. Their questions are very peremptory, usually embodying several "demands," to use their favorite word, and, whichever way they may be answered, committing the candidate questioned to an uncompromising course of action. If he declines to answer them, or, if in answering them, he draws any distinctions, and refuses to be nailed to a simple "yes" or "no" on the lines dictated, he is at once accused of dodging. If he answers them plainly, but not as their propounders wish, he is threatened, I say, with boycotting at the polls. If he answers them as desired, there is an even chance that he will stand pledged to support opinions that he either does not entertain or has never fairly considered, or at least does not hold with anything like the tenacity and earnestness of his querists. But he is afraid of losing their indefinite vote. He thinks that perhaps the question never will come up. Probably, if it does

come up, he will be let off with a speech or a vote or two, in the minority, and then the whole thing will drop; and, as he really does not care very much either way, he might as well go in for one side as another. And so, between the fear of being thought to dodge, which is not dishonorable, and the fear of losing votes, which is hard to characterize, many adopt the third course, answer as they are desired to, and accept the pledge.

Such a course seems to me dishonest, shuffling, and cowardly. In order not to be thought a dodger, the candidate counterfeits a mock enthusiasm and sympathy, which is in itself a dodge. To win supporters, of whose real strength he cannot possibly form an idea, and who are certain to find him out if there is the least pretence in patronage, he loses the only support that never can be uncertain,— the support of his own opinion and conscience; and he effectually ties his hands in the cases which are sure to arise, when principles, stifled for a time, shall speak louder, or when interest, misunderstood, shall show how little he gained by subserviency. And, if he agrees in this way to be any man's man but his own, where is he to stop? Is he to say, "Yes," to all the questions and demands put to him? Is he to be elected, if elected he is, fairly plastered over with pledges; and, having put on badge after badge to gain the soldier vote and the farmer vote and the labor vote and the Irish vote and the temperance vote and the public schools vote and the single tax vote, is he to lose sight of the American citizen's vote, which on every ground is worth all put together?

At every election there are a number of questions of permanent or present importance on which every candidate may fairly be asked to give his opinion in a straightforward and full way, and where he must expect to be held to the opinion so given. There are others which are interesting and important without being vital, which may become vital hereafter, and on which a sincere opinion should, if possible, be avowed, but may fairly be reserved. There are others which are vital or important only in the view of half-informed and passionate visionaries, or which are set by those who believe in them little or not at all for the express purpose of entrapping a candidate and turning him into a butt or a fool. To decline to answer questions so put is not dodging. It is a

righteous and honorable refusal to submit to an inquisition from which even a candidate has a right to be free. But whether questions are fair or not, whether answers are desirable or not, let us get rid of this business of pledges. Let us send our members to legislative and executive work at home and abroad, knowing their opinions, trusting to their honor, but leaving them to their discretion. They will meet in the discharge of their duties with men as faithful, as honorable, as sensible, as themselves. The soundest opinions may reasonably be changed. The fairest purpose may properly be laid aside. Nay, the clearest conscience may find itself in error. Do not deprive your servants of that just exercise of discretion which alone makes service worth having, and, by expecting them to be fettered in pledges, ratify that outrageous dictum of a speaker who could see what is invisible, that legislatures are not deliberative bodies. It seems to me about as right for a legislator to be pledged to vote for a particular bill as for a juryman to enter the box pledged, as they are often said to be, to vote "not guilty" in a given trial. This whole business of questioning and pledging will promote political servility much oftener than political purity.

The necessity of paying political debts is a notorious means of demoralizing candidates, and it will continue as long as the people of the United States admit the idea that helping elect a candidate is always a thing to be paid for. It is a fact that in some places votes are bought with money paid to the voter; yet it is denied by many people, because they say that would be disgraceful, and Americans do not do disgraceful things. On the other hand, it is admitted that political workers are rewarded, the leaders by offices and the rank and file by labor; and the fact that such compensation is admitted shows that most people do not consider it disgraceful, and would probably give way to the system if it crossed their path. It may be it is a corrupting system; but, corrupting or not, it will last till the people, as a whole, consider it a disgrace, and not a credit, to a candidate that he is known to have got places for the boys. You may say the candidates ought to begin, that the people look to them to set a higher tone of purity. Be it so. But what captain, what colonel, is going to storm a battery alone, when his command tells him plainly that they are going to wait to see him

do it? When a few men who are notorious for finding places for the boys get defeated in their second candidacy, we shall begin to see purer candidates. In the mean time let me commend to you Washington's words from Mr. Scudder's recent *Life:* —

"The points in which all my answers to applications for office have agreed in substance are that, should it be my lot to go again into public office, I would go without being under any possible engagement of any nature whatsoever. I thought that, whatever the effect might be in pleasing or displeasing any individuals at the present moment, a due concern for my own reputation, not less decisively than a sacred regard to the interests of the community, required that I should hold myself absolutely at liberty to act, while in office, with a sole reference to justice and the public good."

III. And now, having got our politician nominated and elected, how shall we find him practise his profession? Let no one think I have spent too much time on these preliminary matters; for there are always twice as many persons nominated as are elected, and the attention attracted to the proceedings of all of them during the fever of a campaign is more intense than what the successful half will receive in months of service. Public men are largely judged by the way they stand nomination and election; and those eventful hours do much to fix not only the character a statesman bears in public estimation, but even the real character, which, whether rightly estimated or not, steers him through his political life. What ought that character to be? What is it in most cases?

And at the outset let me not be mistaken. It is my firm belief, my deliberate opinion, my practical object, my cherished ideal, that the life of a politician, of a statesman, is under the very same moral law as that of any professional man, of any business man, of any mechanic, of any laborer. What is moral or immoral, right or wrong, for a man when at twenty-one he becomes his own master, has just exactly the same moral quality at every stage of political service, from the committee that waits on a speaker at the railroad to the Senator, the Secretary, or the President. Or, rather, in proportion as a politician rises in his profession, and claims a larger share of authority and attention, so he is called upon to set a stricter standard of right and wrong before himself,

and maintain it before the public, than when he was a private man or comparatively low in politics. Nor will I consent to draw the distinction which many would, that, while a politician must be scrupulously moral in all things which concern his individual life, politics as politics, as the business of men associated for political purposes, admits a different standard of right and wrong, of honor and dishonor; that what would be false or mean or cruel between John Smith and Thomas Jones is not so between Committeeman Jones and Candidate Smith, acting for their respective parties. I am perfectly prepared to be told that I am a mere amateur politician, who never will be elected to anything, and do not understand matters. I will quote, therefore, in support of my position the opinions of two men among the keenest and most dreaded practical politicians of their day, who fought the Parliamentary battles of America successfully against terrific odds, when she could not fight them for herself; namely, Edmund Burke and John Bright.

"The principles of true politics," said Burke, "are those of morality enlarged; and I neither now do, nor ever will, admit of any other." "It is not only true in morals," said John Bright, "but true in statesmanship; and, in fact, I would not dissociate them at all,— what is true in morals from what is true in statesmanship." And it is most interesting to consider how both these great orators and statesmen carried out these principles so uncompromisingly stated.

The character of Burke was treated in his lifetime in England, Ireland, and America with more than admiration, with something approaching idolatry; and so has his memory been since his death. Yet there are moments in his life when party swept him into its vortex to the extent of defending and approving what outside of party his great conscience would have scorned; and the stains of those very few transactions cannot be wiped out, and stand forever as evidence to confirm Goldsmith's famous line.

But John Bright maintained from first to last as scrupulous a simplicity of character as of dress. He dared in the interests of what he believed a nation's duty, because it was Christian morality, to defy the peerage, to defy both parties, to defy his own ungrateful constituents, and accept defeat at their hands, to defy the majority of the English nation, passionate in defence of a

wicked war or of an insolent minister. He could be unpopular for the right when his own Lancashire was groaning under the pressure of our Civil War, and one word from him could have turned the starving operatives into hot partisans of the South. He could rebuke the Irish, whose champion he had always been, when they pressed their demands one step beyond justice; and to the end of his life he remained the glory of his nation as he had been of his party, forcing his most implacable enemies not merely to tremble before his eloquence, but to bow to his virtue.

This is my standard. This is what politics and politicians ought to be, but it is said it is not so. Politicians are said to be anything but moralists: politics is said to repudiate the Decalogue, and so on. Now precisely the same charges are habitually levelled at the other professions, which count a hundred members where politics counts one. The same men who call politicians venal and false will call the clergy a mass of monks and hypocrites, preaching what they do not believe, leading weak women astray, and denouncing men for vices when they are ignorant of temptations. They will denounce doctors as playing with men's lives, pouring drugs of which they know little into bodies of which they know less, and lawyers for breeding strife, distorting evidence, and helping the guilty to escape justice. For the managers of our great manufacturing and transporting companies, no ink is black enough to portray the cruelty, the recklessness, the chicanery, with which they are charged. Schoolmasters and schoolmistresses are merely forcing intelligent children to dig Greek roots till their eyes drop out; and, if we mildly suggest that at least we make very little by it, we are told we ought eagerly to engage for nothing in the ever-delightful and never tedious task of training the young mind. In short, if the politician is habitually abused for a low morality, he has to share such abuse with the members of the other great professions far more necessary to the public. And, as with the doctor, the lawyer, the minister, the railroad man, so with the plumber or the politician. The average citizen ends by doing without question what this self-seeking, venal, lying person tells him to, and pays him. As far as so-called public opinion goes, the politician is no worse than his neighbors.

But it must be admitted that public men themselves are too slow

to repel this accusation of inferior morality. The Kansas senator is by no means the only active politician who has not only declared, but boasted that the moral law of Jew or Christian has no place in politics. While men of every other profession are ready to stand up, rightly or wrongly, for the purity of motives and practice in that calling, the politician alone deals in the opposite miserable vice, for which we have no name, but which the Greeks called *irony*, boasting of being worse than you are, and saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, scrupulous, candid, generous, or even as this Pharisee. I vote twice in the day. I take tithes from all that I elect." If politicians persist in throwing away the cloak of respectability, they must not be surprised if their fellow-citizens proceed to take away their coat also, in the expectation of finding a skin that sadly needs a bath.

But we ought to consider whether a public man in America is under temptations to adopt a low standard of public morality, whether it is harder for him than for other men to be scrupulous in all his conduct. I believe there are such temptations, and that citizens and voters are bound to consider them seriously. And, first, the very publicity of political service, the picking out of a man to be one of the few whom the city, the country, or the State sees fit to employ, is calculated to turn any man's head, and shake his moral balance. The very fact that any man has a special position, special authority, special influence, that he can do what others cannot, almost inevitably creates in him the feeling, which rose to its maximum in Napoleon Bonaparte, that he *may* do what others *may* not, and that as he to some extent makes the laws for others, so he may also make the law for himself. There is perhaps no more maddening excitement, no more ecstatic pleasure in life, than to be hailed with shouts and clapping as one of the chosen leaders of a free people; but there is nothing which should make a man tremble for himself more profoundly, and remember that he is a man.

> "O popular applause! What heart of man
> Is proof against thine all-seducing charms!
> The wisest and the best feel urgent need
> Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales;
> But, swelled into a gust, who then, alas!

With all his canvas set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power!
Ah! spare your idol, think him human still!
Charms he may have, but he has frailties, too;
Dote not too much, nor spoil what ye admire."

In the United States there is a constant temptation to waive one's scruples from the pressure of local and private interests which demand satisfaction. An American politician is expected to be obliging. He is expected to help on this or that interest which in some peculiar local or personal way appeals to him. He thus gets into the habit of yielding his own sense of what is proper in order to get the favor of a doubtful constituency or an influential friend. He cannot compass these objects alone. He must get help; and so that exquisite business of log-rolling begins, whereby a man votes for twenty schemes about which he knows and cares little, in order to get twenty men's help for a scheme about which he knows and cares too much. This is partly the result of the great size of our country, but our vicious system of strict district representation is largely to blame for it. I trust it will not be improper for me to express an emphatic opinion in favor of going beyond district lines in selecting candidates, with a view to break up local manœuvrings. And also I believe there must soon be halt called to our inordinate legislation in favor of local and special interests, which overrides and stifles national claims and duties.

We call such business jobbery; and it is not unnatural that one who is often called upon in his public capacity to perpetrate jobs for others, schemes which are only for private ends, but have to be paraded as for the public interest, should be tempted into jobs for himself. But the word "job" has another not dishonorable meaning,— a piece of work for which a workman is definitely engaged, to be dismissed when it is done. Our political work is too often regarded as job work in this sense. It is too commonly held that public men are appointed to do merely as they are told, merely as handicraftsmen, not members of a liberal profession. As a result, they get to think so themselves. They become like apothecaries putting up prescriptions rather than physicians grappling with disease, clerks drawing writs rather than counsellors trying cases;

and thus I believe a high, refined, sensitive, professional honor is sure to give way to a lower, blunted, rough mechanism of feeling about their occupation.

Our people, I fear, often mistake their position with reference to those who are elected and appointed to office, in that they expect to dictate to them, to control them, to make them mere mouth-pieces and agents, instead of leaving them to their discretion and sense of responsibility to manage the critical and complicated business of state-craft. These ought to be under obligation to report from time to time to their constituents, and to accept defeat if their conduct has proved unacceptable. Still, the public servant should feel that he is trusted, and that, after some long, varied, arduous term of service, encountering men every whit his equals, he shall not be bitterly reproached, still less displaced, merely because he has not accomplished, perhaps on a calm review of the case has not tried to do, all that his sanguine and probably half-informed electors asked at the outset.

Fellow-citizens, we are thinking at this moment far too much of measures, constitutions, statutes, and far too little of men. You may remodel your methods of legislation as much as you please. You may declare in desperation that we do not know how to work our own constitutional liberty, and transplant processes from Switzerland, which seems to me as sensible as moving the Jungfrau with all her chamois and glaciers over to the Chicago Exposition. You cannot draw up any organic frame of government or work out any system of laws that can possibly provide for every case that will not be misinterpreted, evaded, broken. To make, to execute, to expound, your statutes, you want men,— men of learning, of energy, of experience, of genius,— leaders not merely to interpret and conduct the popular will when it is right, but to mould it, turn it, restrain it, check it, rebuke it, if need be defy it when it is wrong, remembering that a nation can be wrong, and that there is one voice greater even than that of the United States,— the voice of reason, of conscience, of history, of posterity, of God.

But of all the causes that lower the moral standard among politicians, and tempt them to act against their convictions, promoting what they cannot approve and suppressing what they believe, the first is the spirit of party. The spirit of party accepts as its rule

of conduct allegiance to a body of men who have agreed to work together to control the elections and policy of the country. This agreement may be founded on some political theory or principle, on some schemes of present importance, on devotion to some leader great or small, on the tradition of measures or men in times gone by; or, lastly, it may be founded on nothing but a name, under which men agree to hunt together for that public spoil which they are more likely to get jointly than in division. This party spirit may therefore draw into itself all motives, from the highest to the lowest. It may develop heroes and martyrs or brigands and blacklegs. It may make a political connection take the character of a church, an army, a firm, a conspiracy, a confederacy, or a mob. Lord Somers and Titus Oates may both be Whigs; Bishop Ken and Sir John Trevor may both be Tories. But the true devotee to party acknowledges a law of action in public life which is to shut his ears alike to the wider demands of patriotism, the sounder views of judgment, and the sterner appeals of conscience.

We all know the arguments offered to show that party government is necessary in a free country, that public affairs could not be conducted if every one undertook to go on his own lines of thought and action, or if one tried to satisfy the whole country every time. There is no need of presenting this view to you. You hear it on all sides, from members of both the great parties; and there is no one here who thinks about the matter at all that has not at his tongue's end a score of commonplaces on the subject. It seems to be argued that failure to belong to some party, to attend its caucuses, or at least accept their nominations, to stand by its candidates, to support its measures, to rejoice in its success, and to grieve at its defeat, is as absurd as to come to a station to take a train, and, instead of sitting down in the cars and waiting till they go, to jump on the engine, seize the valve, and try to set it in motion at one's own wayward time, regardless of the arrangements made for the public. In short, party allegiance is made a virtue, like fidelity to a wife or to a flag. It is held that there is something morally wrong in not doing all one can to help a party as a party, and that rendering such help, if not in itself pure morality, condones and excuses what under other circumstances is immoral. Moreover, it is held that this allegiance is perpetual,

not passing away when questions of the hour are settled, or when great leaders have done their work and gone to their rest. A party is held to be an undying and indissoluble corporation.

Now, the immediate effect of this theory is to confound useful methods with absolute truths, to exalt machinery to the level of force. Our government is by and for the whole people. Nothing less. Yet we allow a majority to govern. Why? Because there seems no other practical way of approximating to the sense of the whole. But that does not make the part or the party equal to the whole. It does not turn an approximation, often a very remote and rough one, into the true value. Our party is in a majority. It is therefore the country; and all the minority are an unpatriotic faction, wrong in principle, rebellious in practice. Two years pass. Our majority steadily lessens. Still, our party is eternally right, and their party eternally wrong. At last the balance is reversed. They are in the majority. We are in the minority. Are they now equal to the country? Are they the true patriots? Are we factious rebels? Oh, no! They are tricky usurpers, who have imposed upon the people. We are still eternally right, not really rebuked, only unfortunate. And all the time they were saying just the same of us in their hour of weakness as now they re-echo what we said when the triumph was ours.

And who is this people whom we claim to represent, who indorsed us two years ago, but were deceived by our enemies yesterday? Is it a body inside both parties or outside both or partly in each? Does its vote equal the sum or the difference of the two party votes? Does it include active politicians or only silent voters? These questions show at once that the notion that a part can ever be equal to a whole is always absurd. And, finally, it is perfectly easy to show that, owing to our complicated methods of voting, a so-called party majority which elects is often an actual minority of the national vote.

Again, this theory makes mere fidelity to associates the sum and substance of all virtue. It is held to be enough to say in praise of a public man that he stands by his party or in censure of him that he leaves it. But suppose his party is tainted? suppose corrupt men get the upper hand? suppose its machinery is employed on measures so wrong or so foolish that he cannot in conscience or reason support them? suppose, in short, that he finds that his league

has become one for evil, and not for good? He will probably not be alone in these views. Others will feel with him that the party must change or must break, or, rather, that the party is now two parties, and their differences of principle are too radical for compromise or concession. Must he and his submit, and for the sake of a party victory lose all that makes a party victory worth having? Is the honorable and wise politician first to try to get his honorable and wise measures accepted by his base associates, whom he will have to pay higher and yet higher bribes for such support? No. In such cases, fidelity to associates is a sin and a crime. A contract to do immoral things will stand in no court. Party allegiance must exist, subject to earlier and higher duties to one's country and one's conscience.

Perhaps the worst temptation that assails a public man is that of habitually speaking and acting as if his own party were all men of sense and honor, and all of the other party were fools and knaves. I cannot express it better than in the words of Sir James Stephen: "That dangerous counterfeit of public virtue which consists in thinking that your enemies are desperately wicked and deceitful above all things, and that your own party objects are so obviously right and wise that whoever opposes them must act from the vilest of motives in pursuit of the worst of objects."

I need not describe this temper to you. You see it every day, how it insinuates itself into private life, how it turns those who ought to know each other, trust each other, love each other, into strangers and enemies. You know how, even when men retain their mutual confidence in private life, they refuse to act together in public life, even on questions where by no possibility party history or party principles can be introduced, because they have learned to distrust their own feelings, judgment, conscience, where a political opponent is concerned. Can this result be anything but bad? Can it help leading to session after session of legislatures where good men do little but wrangle, where base men merely intrigue, and the poor country do nothing but pray for the day of adjournment?

On the Land Law discussions of 1890 the Irish leaders deliberately declared that they would accept a certain bill if proposed by Mr. Gladstone, but would reject the identical measure coming from Mr. Balfour, even though they were consulted themselves on

its details. What is this but stupid party malignity? In 1880, at a meeting of congratulation on General Garfield's election, I heard an orator declare that one transcendent achievement of the party was the defeat of the infamous Chalmers, the agent of the Fort Pillow massacre. In half a dozen years the identical Chalmers had changed his party name; and the party that elected General Garfield were working to elect him. Only put a given drug into a bottle labelled "our mixture" or "their mixture," and it becomes cordial or poison accordingly.

Every party which is something more than a mere brigands' confederacy for spoils is founded on some principle. This principle may be permanent, rooted in the very theory of government, or it may be temporary, brought up by the hour, and destined to pass away. But, whether permanent or temporary, such a principle never represents more than half of the whole truth. Conservatism and reform, liberty and order, our institutions and our needs, capital and labor, generosity and economy, the legislature and the executive, stability and progress,— there is truth, there is right, there is duty on either side. An intelligent and honest man, a patriot, an enthusiast, can find in either column ground for energy, for effort, for eloquence, for forbearance. But whoever persuades himself that his principle is the only one, that the shield has only one side, and that the country should go on forever following that principle alone and never letting its pendulum swing in other direction, is ignorant of philosophy, unread in history, mistaken in practice. He rather ought to hail the defeat of his favorite principle at times, because it assures him that the country as a whole is thinking for itself; and no partisan deserves to be listened to as a leader who does not treat his opponents not merely with courtesy, with respect, with good humor, but with candor and deference, as those who see a truth not yet clear to himself.

Fellow-citizens, these cautions against the spirit of party, as tending to pervert and dull the consciences of political men, are not new. They have been the warnings of the wise and good for ages, of men to whom practical politics were perfectly familiar under every form of government. They find their loftiest exposition in "Washington's Farewell Address." I am not going to

weary you with a long list of profound philosophers and laborious statesmen who have seconded his counsels, but will give you a single testimony, new to most of you and profoundly valuable by reason of its author.

In 1816 our war with Great Britain was over, and the country was slowly raising its head from the miserable condition into which it had been plunged. New States were rapidly coming into being which knew nothing of Federalism or Republicanism. Mr. Monroe was elected President with slight opposition. A prominent public man in middle life, but covered with laurels both civil and military, urged upon Mr. Monroe to adopt a liberal and non-exclusive policy in his appointments, because he said the condition of the country afforded a noble opportunity to destroy "the monster party." That adviser was Andrew Jackson.

Fellow-citizens, I am sensible I have detained you too long. I have offered these considerations to you not as exhausting the subject, not as solving the problem, but as points whereon to reflect. That the career of the statesman involves a sacrifice of morality I do not believe. I do not believe he need truckle to audacity, nor strike hands with fraud, that he need be either a hypocrite or a charlatan any more than a physician or a lawyer need be the same. His conspicuous and distinguished calling offers countless opportunities, it may be, to prefer the expedient to the right, or the selfish to either; but it also offers equal opportunities for heroism and self-sacrifice. And I believe that the people of the United States, however compelled sometimes to put up with weak and rotten tools, will seize at every chance the more finely tempered and brightly polished blades. And where should that temper and that polish be better acquired than here? It may be true, I believe it is true, that we all need a moral uplifting. I believe in my soul that every calling in the country needs to react from a species of Bohemian self-complacency towards a stern Puritanism. Let the people, let the voters, show on every occasion that honor and conscience are dear to them, and their politicians will not be slow to take the hint; and, leaping over centuries of fog and going back to the pure clear air of the divine Homer, let one patriotic statesman challenge the other in the mottoes of Achilles and Hector. "Ever the first to be, and stand in the van of the others." "One best omen is ours, to fight in defence of our country."

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